

Competencies for Online Faculty

Instructional skills that result in quality e-learning

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Postsecondary instructors must possess the expertise in their respective disciplines as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities to help adults learn. Effective teaching requires specific instructional skill sets (competencies) to ensure that quality learning is taking place. Likewise, competent instructors that use learner-centered teaching methods in their on-ground and online classrooms help to enhance student retention and success.

At MaxKnowledge, we have utilized two sets of instructional skill competencies to develop our training program for instructors who teach in the traditional (on-ground) learning environment. Our program incorporates the competency standards identified by the Career College Association as well as the standards identified by the National Center for Competency Testing (Certified Postsecondary Instructor).

Additionally, in our training program for online instructors, we conducted a thorough review of the available online teaching quality standards and examined the applicability of those standards for career education settings. Our research included review of literature in both secondary and postsecondary education. As a result of our research review and cross-referencing of the available standards, we chose to adopt the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching distributed by the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL). Note: NACOL has recently become the International Association for K-12 Online Learning.

NACOL's standards are primarily based on the work of the Southern Regional Education Board but include standards identified by other research and educational bodies (both at the secondary and postsecondary levels). In consultation with career educators and executives, we modified the NACOL standards as needed to customize them for our sector of higher education.

Our NACOL-based standards for online faculty include 11 competency areas and 62 specific instructional skill competencies. These competencies serve as a foundation to our continuing education courses and training solutions for instructors who teach primarily in the online and blended learning environments. The competency areas are listed below and can be customized and used by career colleges and universities as they see fit:

- The online instructor understands the need to develop technology skills to teach online.

- The online instructor plans, designs and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, interaction, participation and collaboration in the online environment.
- The online instructor provides online leadership and helps increase student success through regular feedback, prompt response and clear expectations.
- The online instructor models, guides and encourages legal, ethical, and safe behavior related to technology use.
- The online instructor understands and is responsive to students with special needs in the online classroom.
- The online instructor demonstrates competencies in creating and implementing assessments in online learning environments in ways that assure validity and reliability of instruments and procedures.
- The online instructor develops and delivers assessments, projects, and assignments that meet outcomes/objectives and assesses learning progress by measuring student achievement of learning goals.
- The online instructor demonstrates competencies in using data and findings from assessments and other data sources to modify instructional methods and content and to guide student learning.
- The online instructor demonstrates frequent and effective strategies that enable students to complete self- and pre-assessments.
- The online instructor collaborates with colleagues.
- The online instructor arranges media and content through instructional design to help students learn most effectively in the online environment.

For a full list of the specific instructional skill competencies, please contact Aimee Sirmon, Vice-President of Communications at MaxKnowledge. Aimee can be reached at aimees@maxknowledge.com, 1-888-626-2407, Ext. 87.

Dr. Moghadam is the founder and CEO of MaxKnowledge, the leading employee training company for the career college sector of higher education. He has over 20 years of experience in career education, serving in many capacities including professor, director of education, academic dean, director of student affairs, campus director, college president and owner. Moghadam earned his PhD in Engineering from the University of Cambridge at the age of 22. He is a recognized leader in career education and has been selected as a Top Innovator by the Career College Central magazine. Moghadam can be reached at amirm@maxknowledge.com.